

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05
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P R 071417Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7978
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 1613
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IT, ET, FR, US
SUBJECT: ETHIO-WESTERN RELATIONS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 1596

1. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR MARCELLO GUIDI TOLD CHARGE MORNING APRIL 7 THAT HE IS CONVINCED ETHIOPIAN GOVT (PMGSE) DOES NOT SERIOUSLY INTEND TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH USG DESPITE APRIL 6 VICTORY DAY RALLY THREATS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL FIKRE SELASSIE WOGDERESS (REF-TEL). HIS COMMENT WAS MADE IN RESPONSE TO CHARGE'S OWN ANALYSIS THAT PMGSE MAY CONTINUE TO MAKE SUCH THREATS PERIODICALLY, BUT ALL OUR OTHER EVIDENCE TO DATE IS THAT MENGISTU AND A FEW OTHERS IN DIRG BELIEVE MAINTAINING SOME LEVEL OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH USG IS STILL DEFINITELY IN PMGSE INTEREST, IF ONLY TO BOLSTER ITS NON-ALIGNED IMAGE. CHEAP SHOTS, SUCH AS FIKRE-SELASSIE'S ARE UNLIKELY TO CAUSE USG TO INITIATE RUPTURE AND ARE AN INEXPENSIVE WAY OF REASSURING SOVIETS. NEVERTHELESS, WE DON'T TAKE THEM LIGHTLY.

2. GUIDI WAS NOT SO SURE ABOUT RELATIONS WITH UK. FOREIGN
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MINISTRY OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HE HAD JUST SPOKE WERE OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY WITH FIKRE SELASSIE'S EXCESSES, GUIDI SAID, BUT THEY HAD EQUALLY GIVEN IMPRESSION THAT BREAK WITH UK IS UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IN AFTERMATH OF FONSEC OWEN'S APRIL 5 SPEECH AT WHICH ETHIOPIAN AMBASSAR HAD WALKED OUT. SHORT OF A BREAK, PMGSE MIGHT ASK THAT BRITISH AMBASSADOR DEREK DAY, PRESENTLY ON CONSULTATION IN LONDON, NOT RETURN. WE WILL TRY TO GET FURTHER

READING FROM BRITISH CHARGE.

3. GUIDI SEES AS BRIGHT SPOT IN WHOLE PICTURE OF ETHIO-WESTERN RELATIONS THE FACT THAT ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY DELEGATION IS NOW SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE MAY 9 AND WILL BE HEADED BY UNDER SECRETARY RADI. ORIGINALLY FOSCHI, IN CHARGE OF IMMIGRATION, WAS SCHEDULED TO LEAD ITALIAN DELEGATION, AND GUIDI INTERPRETS THIS CHANGE AS FORTUNATE INDICATION OF ITALIAN WILLINGNESS TO TAKE UP A BROADER RANGE OF SUBJECTS WITH ETHIOPIANS WHO ARE APPARENTLY STILL ANXIOUS TO RECEIVE THE ITALIAN MISSION. GUIDI SAID HE WAS APPALLED DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS IN ROME A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO BY THE DOWN-THE-LINE PRO-SOMALIA SENTIMENT HE FOUND THROUGHOUT ITALIAN GOVT, ESPECIALLY IN FOREIGN MINISTRY. FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI HAD PERSONALLY TOLD GUIDI THAT HE CONSIDERED ETHIOPIA IS TOTALLY LOST TO THE WEST. GUIDI HAD OBJECTED, CLAIMING THAT IN LONG RUN ETHIOPIAN CULTURE, RELIGION, HISTORIC TIES TO WEST, ETC., WILL BRING HER BACK INTO FOLD, OR AT LEAST OUT OF SOVIET ORBIT. GUIDI ADMITTED THAT HE WAS TALKING IN VERY LONG TERMS. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS BECAUSE OF THAT FAITH THAT HE FEELS WESTERN POWERS SHOULD HAND IN HERE AND, THEREFORE, THIS DECISION FROM ROME WAS THE RIGHT ONE.

4. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BARBIER, SOON TO LEAVE ON ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT, HAS BEEN TRYING WITHOUT SUCCESS FOR ALMOST A WEEK TO DELIVER A MESSAGE TO FOREIGN MINISTER FELLEKE. DESPITE FOREIGN MINISTRY SUGGESTIONS THAT HE DEAL AT EUROPEAN DIVISION LEVEL, CONFIDENTIAL

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BARBIER IS HOLDING OUT FOR MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER -- OR ABOVE HIM WITH PMAC MEMBER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MAJOR BERHANU BAYEH. ALTHOUGH THIS DOES NOT SEEM INORDINATE DELAY TO US, FRENCH ARE INTERPRETING IT THAT WAY AND THEREBY CONTRIBUTING TO GENERALLY GLOOMY MOOD CONCERNING ETHIO-WESTERN RELATIONS. THEY ARE BEGINNING TO GET ANXIOUS ABOUT AGREEMENT FOR NEW AMBASSADOR REQUESTED FEB 23.

5. THERE IS STILL NO EVIDENCE OF WHAT TOOK PLACE DURING MENGISTU'S JUST-COMPLETED THREE-WEEK TRIP TO MOSCOW. WE WILL NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IT BEFORE VENTURING MUCH MORE ON ETHIO-WESTERN AS WELL AS ETHIO-SOVIET RELATIONS. MATHERON

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